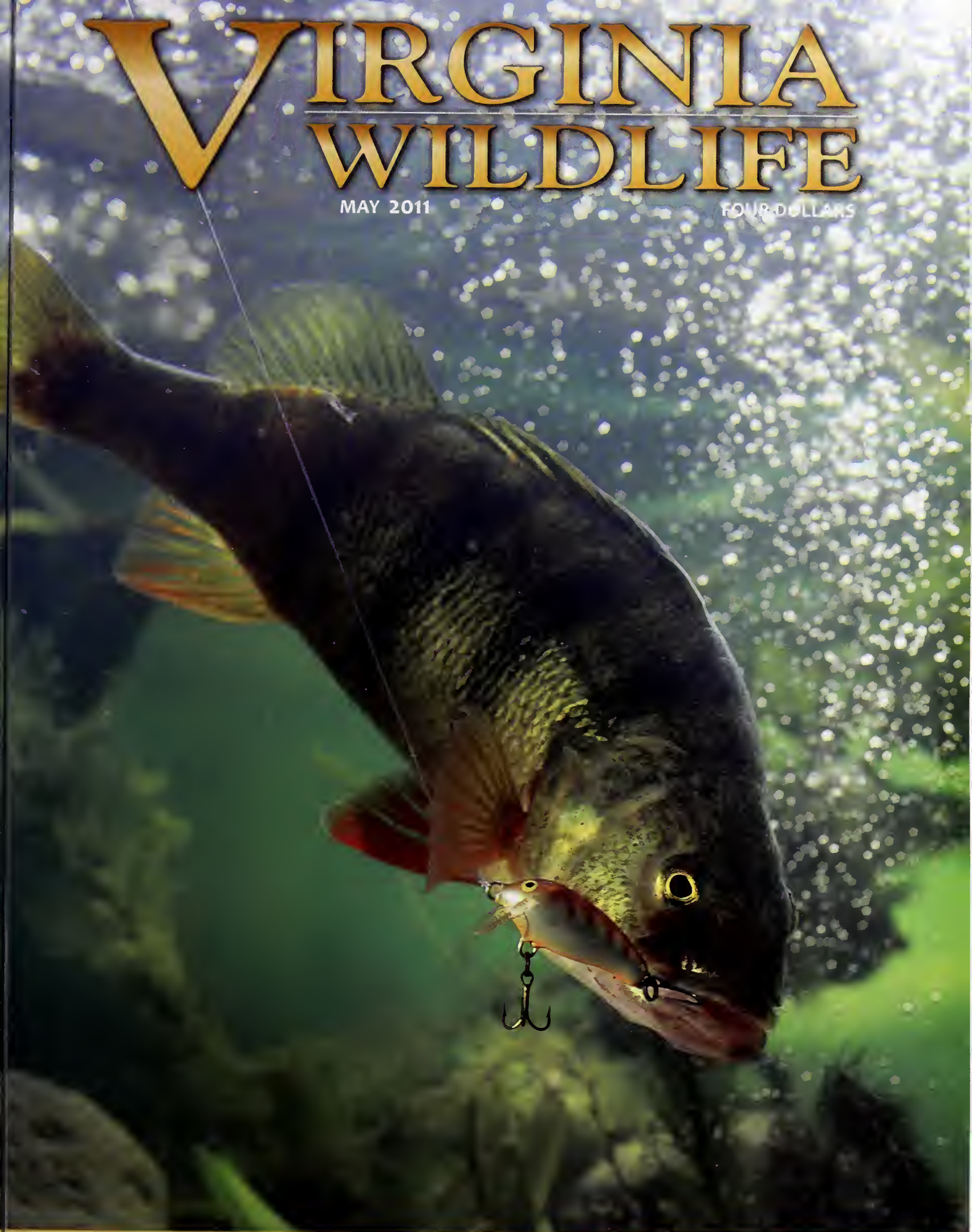
VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

MAY 2011

FOUR DOLLARS



Chasing Yellow Neds • Grouse & Grizzled Skippers • Fairfax County Trout

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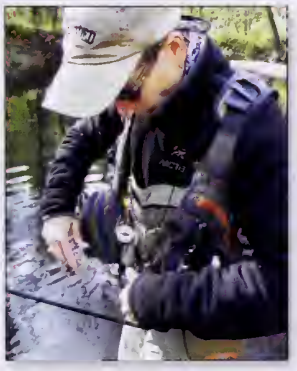

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BOB DUNCAN
Executive Director

The historical New River, with tales of Mary Draper Ingles in *The Long Journey Home*, shaped my family's existence for generations. The handmade wooden fishing boats built by my grandfather were ideally suited for plying its waters, and I still have old and faded newspaper clippings that recorded some of his best catches. I have also spent time on Claytor Lake, which separates its upper and lower reaches. My brother Mike and I waded for smallmouth and redeyes near our childhood home in Radford and, along with our dad, fished for channel cats in the deep bend at Eggleston. At other times, we fished while wading or drifting the upper reaches close to our ancestral lands near Fries and Ivanhoe. These are special places in my heart and mind and, as featured on page 10, they are places to cherish for their healthy and productive conditions.

Also covered in this issue is an update on a disease that is literally wiping out entire populations of native, cave-dwelling bats: White-Nose Syndrome (WNS). The proliferation of this fungus has proven very difficult to understand. Our Department is performing due diligence to lower the risk of spreading WNS by monitoring caves and bat populations, by educating the public, and by reaching out to cavers and other cave visitors who might unknowingly act as WNS 'carriers' when they spend time in the woods. We are participating in both regional and national forums about White-Nose Syndrome and cooperating with adjoining states by sharing information.

As has been the case in managing other wildlife diseases such as Chronic Wasting Disease in deer, sometimes we appear to have the upper hand, while at other times serendipity trumps our best efforts. No one knows why WNS has traveled in an arc from New England to the Virginias, but has not been found in Kentucky caves. Perhaps a micro-climate has prevented its spread there. We have yet to fully understand the pathology of WNS or the impacts of its presence throughout Virginia's mountains, and what that portends for the future.

One thing we do know, as author Cristina Santiestevan points out: we will miss our bats! The collective impact from the loss of bats—both as predator and prey species—upon the larger food web, upon farmers who will lose their insect-controlling services, and upon the broader economy—food prices, for example—is sobering to consider. We can, and should, heed the directives given by scientists studying the disease. We can support their research and hope for the understanding to turn the situation around.

The seriousness of White-Nose Syndrome calls to mind just how important *healthy* ecosystems are to the wildlife therein, and how inextricably linked those ecosystems are to human health and economic prosperity. Staying on top of these wildlife diseases is not a matter of choice, nor should it be. It will take sustained effort and focus, as well as the application of dollars and manpower to keep pace. We simply cannot afford not to.

Where we enjoy healthy resources—in waterways like the New River that support strong fisheries, for example—we should celebrate the conservation measures that sustain them. I'm sure that granddad would agree.

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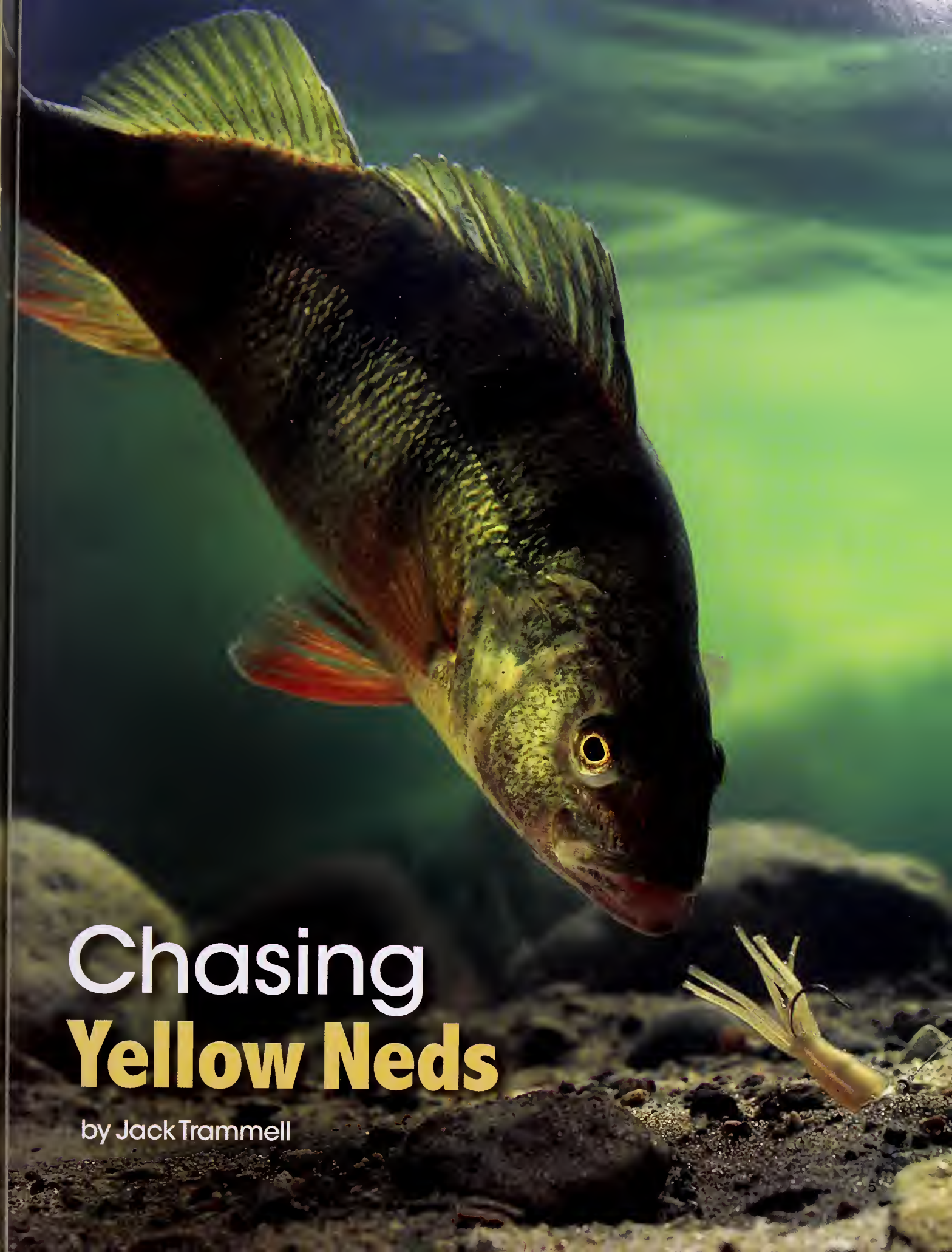

Chasing Yellow Neds

by Jack Trammell

©Dwight Dyke

Swimming against the tide of some mighty challenges, the yellow perch still charms Virginia anglers.

©Jack Trammell

Perca, from the early Greek for perch, and *flavescens*, from the Latin for becoming gold colored: No single species of fish tells the story of Virginia's freshwater environmental challenges better than the story of the yellow perch. The yellow perch has countless local names all over North America and Canada: American perch, bandit fish, calico bass, convict, coontail, Eisenhower, yellow ned, jack perch, raccoon perch,

Left, against the backdrop of vast marshland in the Chickahominy River, perch aficionado Bill Buck looks pleased with his latest catch. Above, a combination jig with a live worm works well to draw them in.

©Bill Lindner Photography

redfin trout, river perch, among others. In many Virginia locales like the Chickahominy River, the fish is commonly called simply a ring perch. In 2009, Virginia anglers caught 591 citation yellow neds (12 inches in length or more, or weighing 1 lb. 4 oz. or more), ranking it as an extremely popular sport fish, despite its competition with perennial superstars like largemouth bass and trout.

Ring perch are a vividly colored fish, with compact, oval-shaped bodies ideally suited for the cool, clear waters in which they school and feed. In Virginia waters they commonly have deep green backs ranging into golden brown along the sides, which is interrupted by seven dramatic, tapered vertical bars, or rings. Along the belly, they are white with bright orange anal fins, particularly colorful on males. Photographs and illustrations do not always serve the ring perch justice; its colors are striking, lush, and tropical—particularly in breeding males.

The ring perch is slightly humped behind the head compared to other bass, with two separated dorsal fins; the first, spiny-rayed, and the second, soft-rayed. The anal fin has seven to eight rays. The ring perch also has additional scales extending from the gill flap that differentiate it from some of its bass cousins. Its appearance is streamlined, and fishermen value the yellow perch's relative strength compared to other fishes its size.

Virginia's Yellow Perch

Adult ring perch in Virginia commonly range between 6 and 12 inches in length. The Department's (DGIF) citation program recognizes any fish 12 inches or longer as a citation fish, but many old-timers remember when 2- and 3-pound ring perch ranging to 16 inches in length were commonplace. Fish this size still roam in the Great Lakes. In Cleveland the ring perch is synonymous with a "fish sandwich." The current Virginia state record was caught in one of the premier state ring perch fisheries: a 2 lb. 7 oz. monster netted in Lake Moomaw in 1999 by Tim Austin. Lake Moomaw saw 52 citation ringers reported in 2009; only the Pamunkey River had more. The world record is 4 lbs. 3 oz., caught in Cross Wicks Creek, New Jersey in 1865. For the moment at least, that record does not seem to be in any danger.

Ring perch seemed almost to disappear in some Virginia waters between the 1950s, when there were several newsworthy fish kills in bay rivers, and the 1960s and '70s, when

pollution and toxins reached peak levels. Not surprisingly, other sportfish populations like largemouth bass also declined precipitously during this period. During the 1990s, however, the ring perch made a comeback in many waters like the Chickahominy River and other watersheds of the Chesapeake Bay, but nowhere has the ring perch returned in the numbers or sizes relative to the first half of the previous century, when it supported a thriving commercial fishery in tidal rivers all around the bay from Maryland south to almost North Carolina.

Tips For Successful Pursuit

Yellow perch favor water temperatures around 68 degrees, give or take five degrees. "I read in the *In Fishermen* that the temperature is the key," Bill Buck, a yellow perch angler explains. "Anything above 70 degrees and you can forget it. They'll be in the deeper water." In the late winter, cooler temperatures are necessary to trigger the mass spawn.

Like most other fish, ring perch inhabit discrete parts of a river or lake during different seasons of the year. They can be caught in shallows at the mouths of creeks in late spring evenings, but generally inhabit deeper waters near thermo clines in the summer. In the spring, they are often attracted to structure along steep drop-offs and guts (small tidal fingers of water that rise and fall in connection to creeks and the river). In the late summer, ring perch follow vegetation and lily pads that border steep drops. Conventional wisdom maintains that larger ring perch prefer deeper water, which in rivers might mean 10 to 15 feet or more, and even deeper in large lakes. The drop-offs near guts typically range up to 8 to 10 feet in depth.

"If you aren't catching anything and it's a spot you know holds fish, you need to fish even deeper. Make sure you're getting to the bottom," one angler says.

The ring perch is carnivorous, and therefore an active fish in pursuit of food. In rivers, they tend to be most active in the morning and again in the afternoon; in lakes, in the early morning and prior to dusk. Though they may be dormant for periods of time, they are also opportunists that may seize the moment when presented with a tempting meal.

Fishing for them involves a variety of techniques. In lakes, guide Neil Renouf recommends jigs as the top artificial bait. "Vertical jigging blade baits put quality fish in the boat day after day."

Likewise, jigs are popular along the river. Bill Buck also insists that they must be "tipped" with live bait, like wax worms or meal worms. "It makes all of the difference as far as I'm concerned," he says.

Yellow perch are primarily site feeders, so presentation is a key. Loners come into the boat while fishing for other species, but to lock into a school requires getting the lure and/or bait to where the yellow perch are, and this often means fishing deeper, sometimes right on the bottom. This also means that rigs with spinners or bright blades enhance the angler's odds of success. Many crappie jigs work well for yellow perch when delivered to the right spot.

Some anglers insist that marking schools with a fish finder is important. "They will mark as short thin lines, generally no more than half a foot from the bottom."

A variety of live baits work well for yellow neds, especially since their natural diet consists of small bait fish, crawfish and other crustaceans, as well as larva and other serendipitous possibilities (they are caught on worms when fishing for bluegill, for example). In general, anglers enhance their odds by rigging their bait with crappie jigs or spinner combos to deliver the bait properly and attract immediate attention. Yellow perch are generally known as "good biters," with the challenge often being to locate them at optimum feeding times.

Yellow perch have a good flavor for the frying pan and can be prepared in the kitchen in a variety of ways. The meat is white, flaky, and delicate. Though there are consumption warnings and restrictions on certain waters, due to pollution, yellow neds must be considered one of the better eating sport fishes of Virginia—along with trout, panfish like bluegill, and rockfish.

Still, yellow neds remain relatively less known than other species. A growing number of Virginia anglers are discovering the pleasures of chasing yellow neds, and perhaps in the coming years there will be a new state record as a result!

Jack Trammell teaches sociology at Randolph-Macon College. He recently published the book, Down on the Chickahominy: The Life and Times of a Vanishing Virginia River.

©Bill Lindner Photography

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Clearing a

Efforts continue to designate a Virginia section of the New as scenic.

by Tim Thornton

When Thomas Batts and Robert Fallam followed the New River in 1671, they thought it was a route to the Pacific Ocean. They were sure they saw the tide coming in near Pearisburg.

"We set up a stick by the water side," their journal says, "but found it ebbed very slowly."

When Lynn Crump set out on the New River last July, she wasn't as misguided as those Englishmen, but she was entering unexplored territory of a sort. Since the 1970s, Virginia's Scenic Rivers Program has recognized waterways across the commonwealth for their beauty, their history, and their recreational value. About 700 miles of Virginia rivers are in the program. Only the York and the New have no section of river, stream, or tributary on the list.

To mark the program's 40th anniversary, its 15-member citizen advisory board decided to do something about that. So Crump, an environmental programs planner for the Department of Conservation and Recreation, joined the National Committee for the New River's annual river expedition. The committee paddled from Boone, North Carolina, to Gauley Bridge, West Virginia. And Crump paddled Virginia's section, weighing what she saw against the program's 13 criteria.

"Pretty much all that we studied qualifies," she reports.

Landowners are often suspicious of government designations of their property or

Path for a Scenic River

anything near it. But the Scenic Rivers Program's small list of restrictions affects government much more than property owners. If a company wants to put a pipeline or a power line across a scenic river, state agencies have to consider the effect that will have on the river before issuing permits. And no scenic river can be damned without the approval of the General Assembly.

"Our program does not make any change in how a landowner manages or develops their property," Crump says. "It's not the state coming in, telling people what to do. It's a local effort saying we want the state to recognize what we have here and we want to recognize it ourselves."

Communities have different reasons for wanting a scenic river. Some use the designation to promote tourism. Some use it to promote their community's quality of life when they're trying to attract new business and when existing businesses are trying to attract new employees. Landowners along a scenic river can get extra points when they apply for conservation easements and some grants.

The New River Today

The New River has been following pretty much the same course since before the Appalachian Mountains existed. The South Fork starts in the mountains above Boone, N.C., and the North Fork starts to the west of there, on Snake Mountain. The streams wriggle and grow their way north, then join fewer than five river miles from the Virginia state line. Virginia holds roughly 160 miles of the New River, about twice as much as West Virginia. But 26 miles of North Carolina's section of the New are a state scenic river and a national "Wild and Scenic" river; 53 miles of West Virginia's section are a national river and part of the national parks system. None of Virginia's section of the New has any similar designation.

©Dwight Dyke

A paradise for recreational pursuits, the upper New River draws visitors from across Virginia and beyond.

©Dwight Dyke

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The town of Fries hopes to benefit from increased tourism, which would accompany Scenic River designation. The presence of sensitive species in the New River, such as the hellbender below, indicates good water quality and a healthy river.

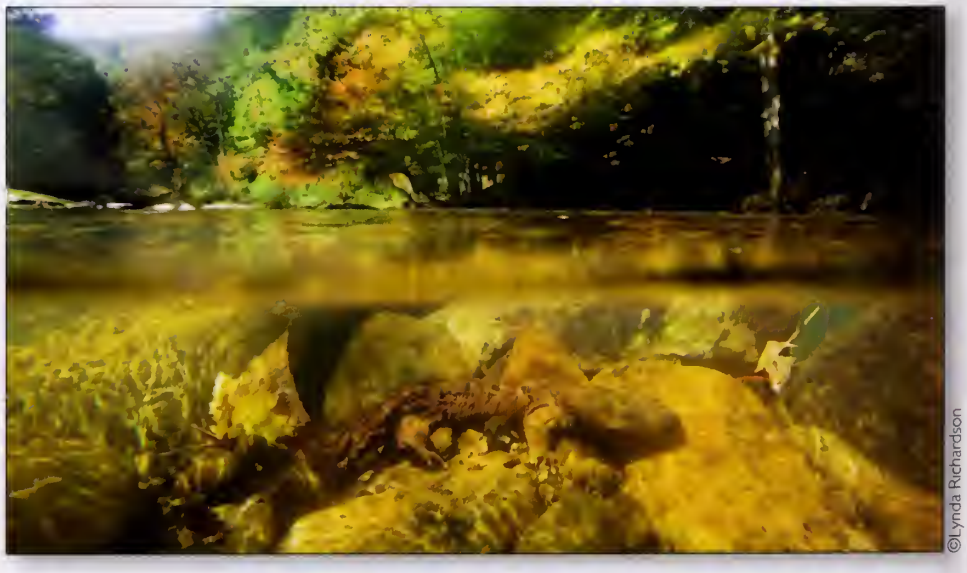
In 2007, a U.S. senator from North Carolina tried to add 21 miles of the New that snake back and forth between North Carolina and Virginia to the Wild and Scenic list, but according to personal accounts, Virginia legislators somewhat resented a North Carolinian's encroachment on Virginia's river and the legislation died.

Another Virginia section of the New has been under consideration for national Wild and Scenic status since 1992. In 2009, the National Park Service released a study that said the six-mile section, plus about 13 miles of river in West Virginia, qualifies for the Wild and Scenic designation. But the Park Service recommended against it. There's not enough local support, according to the report. So the Giles County Board of Supervisors, the county's representatives in the General Assembly, then-Congressman Rick Boucher's staff, and local citizens' groups all said they were for it. Nothing happened.

The New is famous as a bass fishery. But the section that runs from the Giles County town of Glen Lyn to West Virginia also has walleye and excellent habitat for hellbenders, the largest salamander in North America. The nocturnal predators grow about an inch a year in the wild, biologists say, and they can live more than 30 years. Eagles and osprey are common on this section of the waterway, and it holds what *The New River Atlas* calls "the best bateau sluices on the New River." The cuts made for cargo-hauling bateau are fun runs for kayaks and canoes, but there's nearly always a quieter way around for boaters who'd rather not rattle their fishing gear around.

The old pig path of a road that runs river left has been upgraded into a fine dirt road that allows relatively easy access. The Army Corps of Engineers controls the land in Virginia. The West Virginia Department of Natural Resources manages the land past State Line Falls. From Glen Lyn to West Virginia, the only hint of development visible from the river is an occasional cornfield.

Noah Adams, whose bestselling book, *Far Appalachia,* followed the New River from Snake Mountain to Gauley Bridge, called it one of the most pristine sections of the river. "You see West Virginia up there on the horizon," he says, "and there's nothing around you and that's just exactly what your ancestors would have seen."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A happy angler in Giles County

Upper New River Watershed, DGIF-GIS Lab, courtesy of Lenée Pennington

©Dwight Dyke

New River Trail State Park, Wythe County

Pressing Forward

George Santucci, executive director of the National Committee for the New River, calls it "one of the most spectacular sections of the river that's not already a national park or state park."

Fishing guide Britt Stoudenmire, who took a Park Service contingent through that section during their study, remarks, "This section of river is so untouched, so remote. It's just an incredible area that needs to stay like this for the next couple of million years."

John Copeland, whose work with the Department takes him all over Virginia's part of the New, refers to it as, "one of the most scenic areas of that entire section." It's particularly pretty in the fall, he notes.

But it's not first in line to become one of Virginia's Scenic Rivers.

"There's a lot of people interested in Giles County, but there's also lots of controversy in Giles County," says Crump.

Some people in Giles County are suspicious of a state program. Others think it might affect an Appalachian Power project that's put about 250,000 cubic yards of coal ash in the floodplain upriver. "So we thought we'd start at the other end of the state," Crump explains, "where the controversy is not so emphatic."

That means Grayson County, home to two of the New's biggest controversies. In the 1960s, Appalachian Power Company planned to build a pair of dams that would have flooded more than 40,000 acres. Virginia's Department of Corrections planned to build a prison at nearly the same spot in 2006. Both plans were defeated by citizen uprisings. Mary Lily Nuckolls, who sits on the Scenic Rivers board, calls the designation "a hedge against threats for the future." If some other development comes along that residents don't want, she says, "You've got a whole committee and the ear of the governor to fight for you."

Nuckolls, who lives on the riverbank with her husband, Jim, worries about getting support from people who see the river only when they're crossing it on a bridge. "I'm sure we're going to have to do some education," she admits.

Fries Mayor Gary Sumner doesn't need educating. "Oh good golly," Sumner bristles, "The trail and the river are the only chance we have to *have* a livelihood."

The town of Fries was named for the man who owned the cotton mill that opened there in 1903. When the mill closed in the 1980s, the town's reason for being was gone.

"Our economic situation has changed drastically," says former Mayor Marie Isom. "We're kind of like the rest of the country. We have to look for different ways instead of the big industry. We're having to rely on other things. If people from Fries don't start thinking out of the box, other than the old tried-and-true ways, we're going to go under. That's all there is to it."

Fries has turned to the Crooked Road, an effort which celebrates the area's musical heritage, the New River Trail, and the river itself to generate a living. The town is building a birding trail, too. Old mill houses and dormitories have become rental cabins and B&Bs. Isom and Sumner think a scenic river will make their little town even more attractive.

"It's just another piece of the tourism puzzle that will draw people to our town," Isom believes.

If Nuckolls and Sumner and Isom convince the Grayson County Board of Supervisors that having a scenic river is a good thing, the designation could come as soon as next year's General Assembly session.

Tim Thornton is a Montgomery County writer whose work has earned the Phillip D. Reed Memorial Award for outstanding writing on the southern environment and recognition from the Society of Environmental Journalists.

Of Grouse and

©Leonard Lee Rue III

by Bruce Ingram

When it comes to habitat, what's good for one is also good for the other.

"Hunters don't always realize that what's good for game animals is often good for nongame species. And bird and other wildlife watchers may not realize that habitat improvements beneficial to birds, butterflies, and wildflowers also benefit deer, turkeys, and ruffed grouse. Just imagine what will be accomplished when these user groups work together more closely."

It is a day for weighty musings as Mike Donahue and I walk down a gated road deep in western Virginia's George Washington and Jefferson National Forest (GWJNF). Donahue, a biological technician for the U.S. Forest Service, speaks those words and guides me on this mid-April day. It is breeding season for the Appalachian grizzled skipper (*Pyrgus wyandot*)—a butterfly that few wildlife watchers, and likely even fewer upland bird hunters, have probably ever heard of. But what is good for the skipper is good for Old Ruff.

Grizzled Skippers

©Jeffrey Pippen

"Skippers occur on habitat that is managed for ruffed grouse," continues Donohue, who lives in Roanoke. "This habitat is generally open, semi-open, to shale woodlands (in soils above shale deposits). For several years, we've treated places within a grouse management area to benefit the skipper. Treatment has included cutting and removing the woody growth within the existing roads to selling older timber. By treating this small tree/shrub layer, it allows and encourages the skipper's host and nectar plants to expand."

District wildlife biologist Al Bourgeois, with the Department (DGIF), says that this particular area of the national forest is not naturally prime grouse habitat, as these birds prefer moister areas instead of the dry shale soil we are traversing. Nevertheless, grouse do live here because of the management activities that have been conducted.

Early successional habitat is in increasingly short supply on the GWJNF, as preservationist groups that lobby against *any* timber cutting on public land protest or threaten to litigate whenever logging is proposed. The irony is that such groups proclaim to love wildlife and want to protect habitat diversity. Yet their protests can harm species like the skipper, the grouse, and numerous species of songbirds, as well as hinder habitat diversity.

"The grizzled skipper is one of the earliest butterflies to take flight," explains Mike as we continue walking. "They emerge from the leaf litter in mid-April and immediately start looking for a mate. After mating, females lay eggs on Canada cinquefoil, which thrive in fields and open woods. If there's no early successional habitat, there's no cinquefoil and thus no skippers. Skippers are only active for a

©Bruce Ingram

A hunter and his bird dog rejoice in a successful hunt. Like the grizzled skipper (below) grouse need early successional habitat.

The Skipper Family

Some 250 species of skipper dwell in North America and are known for their rapid "skipping" flight. As a group, they feature proportionally larger bodies and smaller wings than other butterflies. On average, they are also smaller than true butterflies and people often confuse skippers with moths. Skipper caterpillars weave silk and leaf shelters and the chrysalises typically are covered with powder, a substance that has come off on a young explorer's hands on more than a few occasions.

©Jeffrey Pippen

few weeks, then die after they mate—so timing is crucial."

Canada cinquefoil *(Potentilla canadensis)* is a low-growing, five-leaved native plant that spreads by vining stems. Its half-inch yellow flower blooms in spring. Perhaps its color or smell draws the grizzled skipper. The female skipper lays her eggs on a leaf and folds it back as a protective mechanism. Later, the caterpillars feed on the green leaves. The pupa stage is spent in the leaf litter near the cinquefoil.

When skippers emerge in April, they are barely more than an inch long with grayish black wings with white markings on the upper wings. The skipper name comes from the creature's tendency to make short "skipping" flights from plant to plant.

In the Old Dominion's Appalachian Mountains, the grizzled skipper often inhabits its shale barrens and other open areas and, interestingly, like the grouse, prefers those open areas to be within close proximity to oak or pine forests. Sadly, the gypsy moth's presence —and control treatment in the form of insecticide spraying—has eliminated the skipper from many areas.

As we walk along the logging road, Donahue points out that grizzled skippers, like grouse and Canada cinquefoil, can't live in old growth or mature forests. The same is true with songbirds such as the prairie warbler, yellow-breasted chat, and golden-winged warbler.

On our Sunday ramble, the air temperature hovers in the upper 30s, a cold front has hit the area, the wind is gusting, and Donohue worries that the poor conditions are not favorable for spotting skippers. At the start of our jaunt, we hear tufted titmice, pine warblers, ovenbirds, and ravens, but the blustery conditions are not very conducive to the birds singing or to our hearing them. I observe some turkey scratching and droppings and decide to utter a few hen yelps, but the wind drowns out any response even if there was one.

Then we come to an important skipper plant, and Donohue is encouraged.

"There's bird's-foot violet. Skippers love to nectar on them!" he exclaims.

I have never heard of the word *nectar* employed as a verb, but the usage seems appropriate. *Viola pedata* features blue-violet flowers with five petals, six-inch stems, and leaves, appropriately enough, shaped like birds' feet.

Donahue then spots a small butterfly flitting up ahead and we both run toward it, hoping that it's a grizzled skipper.

"It's a wild indigo duskywing," notes the technician. "It's a member of the skipper family, just not the one we are looking for. This habitat is good for duskywings *(Erynnis baptisiae)* too."

Right, the Canada cinquefoil (*Potentilla canadensis*) is an important host plant for the grizzled skipper and found in open areas attractive to grouse.

The air temperature warms a few degrees; bluejays, goldfinches, and towhees begin to sing; and Donohue hopes that the grizzled skippers will likewise become active.

"They're really thermal regulated," he explains. "If it's too cold for the plants they nectar on to have their flowers open, then the skippers won't fly."

We next arrive at one of the most beautiful plants I have ever seen—dwarf crested iris, *Iris cristata*. The plant features the standard iris leaves, only miniaturized, and gorgeous violet blue flowers with three sepals.

"Here's an interesting question," ponders my guide. "Do grizzled skippers nectar on dwarf crested iris? Biologists still don't know all the food sources of skippers, and maybe, or maybe not, this is one of them."

Our next stop is at a known skipper host plant, Canada cinquefoil. Suddenly, Donohue and I track a winged insect in characteristic skipper-like flight, and I dash off after it, camera at the ready. The warmer air has made the butterflies quicker and more active, and I can't catch up to the creature.

"That's the problem with photographing skippers," Donohue laughs. "If it's too cold, they won't fly. If it's warmer, they skip about too fast. That looked like a duskywing anyway."

More birds are singing now, as Carolina chickadees, white-breasted nuthatches, worm-eating warblers, and blue-gray gnatcatchers join the chorus. The dogwoods and trailing arbutus are in bloom, and a Cooper's hawk soars overhead. We encounter spicebush swallowtails, sulphur butterflies, and a grove of bear oaks (a low-growing member of the red oak family) with their fingernail-sized acorns still on the ground.

"No wonder grouse like habitat like this," marvels Donohue. "A grouse could have a fine time here with all these bear oak acorns and the thick vegetation."

Our day is over with no confirmed sightings of the grizzled skipper. However, we have observed a host of native animals and plants in what some might consider just ugly, early successional growth. But to grouse, grizzled skippers, and other flora and fauna, this is most definitely home.

Bruce Ingram is the author of several fishing and river guides. For more information, contact him at be_ingram@juno.com.

RESOURCES

Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Butterflies, Audubon Society Field Guide to Trees: Eastern Region, http://marketplace.aubudon.org/products/, (800) 733-3000.

Beltway Insi
The Trou
Fairfax C

story and photos
by Beth Hester

Forty or so minutes west of interior Fairfax County, and I'm in the parking lot of the Little River Inn in Aldie, post-breakfast, scraping ice from my side-view mirrors with the edge of a credit card. A lovely, early November frost catches me pleasantly off-guard. With windows clear, my 5-weight travel rod snug in its compact tube, and a new pair of sale-price waders neatly packed in the back of my truck, I head east to meet Kiki Galvin of Ms. Guided Fly Fishing Services. Her amusing motto is: "Don't be *misled* when you can be *Ms. Guided*." Kiki's an experienced Northern Virginia-based fly-fishing guide, and we were scheduled for a full day fly-fishing tour of Washington D.C. Beltway trout, and the delayed-harvest waters of Accotink and Holmes Run.

Accotink Creek and Holmes Run are designated delayed harvest streams. The Department (DGIF) stocks them with brown and rainbow trout for recreational anglers. This stocking is necessary because these streams no longer support native trout populations. Once upon a time, many streams in Virginia supported wild brook trout, but habitat degradation has eliminated many native fish.

Highly-developed, heavily populated urban landscapes of concrete, asphalt, and other impervious surfaces have replaced green fields and forested areas. The result? Increased stream bank erosion and non-point source pollution, brought about by elevated stormwater runoff. High runoff volumes increase sediment flow into local waterways. When combined with elevated stream temperatures from shade tree canopy loss and heat-retaining

Above, Kiki drifts a streamer through a deep pool. Right, another Accotink brown trout falls for Kiki's "It's a Girl" streamer.

urban environs, the natural trout lifestyle is inhibited. Trout are coldwater species. Metropolitan streams and creeks are under intense pressure, especially during the hot summer months.

Specifically, Accotink and Holmes Run are hard-fished, sensitive zones within multi-use urban areas. The waters flow past adjacent parks, housing developments, and apartment buildings—often with barely any transition other than a steeply graded, rock-strewn bank, or in the case of Holmes Run, a gorge-like wall. Intrepid anglers share space with joggers, trail bikers, and power walkers. Both streams are within earshot of the 495 Beltway and the high-octane communities that ring 'round our nation's capital; yet, certain sections of both waterways are startlingly scenic, giving first-time anglers an odd sensory jolt. Fishing and exploring remoter areas of Accotink and Holmes Run are unusual, time-out-of-time experiences.

Kiki is an ideal guide, passionate and knowledgeable. She's a tailgate evangelist of sorts for fly fishing, and a staunch advocate for trout. Her pickup truck is stuffed with fishing gear, spare clothing, lunch, and angling-related educational pamphlets. Her multi-layered network of friends stems from her myriad volunteer efforts with organizations like the Northern Virginia Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Casting for Recovery, and Project Healing Waters. Her TU chapter has also partnered with DGIF during stocking and clean-up initiatives. She reaches out to new anglers and mentors budding fly tiers. Once a month, she hosts the "Tie-One-On" fly tying gathering, where a group of women select a particular pattern and learn to tie it for upcoming fishing adventures.

On this particular Saturday we fished each stream in turn. As Kiki helped me refine the mechanics of my over-powered saltwater accustomed casts, she talked about the importance of urban angling opportunities, local conservation efforts, and the value of these semi-wild places.

Accotink Creek

On Pine Ridge and Accotink, we park near a stretch of suburban houses. In the low morning light, irregular patches of remaining fall foliage offer brilliant contrast. As we line our rods, Kiki gives me a mini lesson in delayed harvest fisheries:

"The streams we're fishing today are freestone. They meander through communities, and there are varying degrees of easy public access along their length. Access at other points sometimes means cautious scrambling down steep embankments. The Fairfax County Park Authority and DGIF have constructed information kiosks here and at Holmes Run to educate anglers about delayed harvest regulations.

In the spring and fall, these waters are stocked with rainbows and browns. From October 1st through May 31st, fish must be returned to the water safely… but for the remainder of the calendar, general trout regulations apply and trout may be creeled. Anglers must use artificial lures, and single hooks."

As we traversed Accotink Creek, casting black and olive woolies to cover, it became obvious that all things being equal, this was a better place for angling than I'd anticipated. Intricate networks of tree roots, scattered boulders, pools, and little riffles provide good quality areas in which trout hide and feed. This is not to say that the tea-colored waters aren't home to the usual signs of city encroachment, and abuse, and there are intermittently scattered bottles, plastic bags, and rags of undetermined origin in evidence. This isn't Yeats' idyllic hazelwood.

But it's also obvious that there are cadres of caring individuals and organizations who've adopted these areas, and they go to great lengths to keep them as clean as possible. Kiki elaborates:

Kiki's "It's a Girl" Streamer Recipe

This Wooly Bugger imitation won Kiki first place in a 'one-fly' contest. The colors resemble a minnow's sheen and the marabou undulates, adding realistic swimming action. It's like a cheeseburger for trout and bass.

Presented like a streamer and retrieved with varying stripping speeds, it's perfect for fishing pools, or in and around deadfall and undercut banks.

- Hook – 4X #10 Streamer
- Hackle – Grizzly
- Thread – Black 6/0
- Body – Fluorescent pink chenille, or pink ice chenille
- Weight – Optional 1/8 faceted tungsten bead
- Tail – White or black marabou

RESOURCES

- Kiki Galvin: Ms. Guided Fly Fishing – www.msguidedflyfishing.net
- Northern Virginia Trout Unlimited – www.nvatu.org
- Friends of Accotink – www.accotink.org
- Casting for Recovery – www.castingforrecovery.org

"Our TU chapter, along with other regional organizations have really adopted these streams and creeks as our own, and we participate in initiatives to keep these and other waters cleaner, healthier, and more fishable for everyone. Education is a key component of our efforts. For example, the Trout in the Classroom program is fabulous; it draws in the younger generation. Kids discover the value of trout and the environments in which they live through hands-on activities.

"They raise trout from eggs, care for them as they develop into fingerlings, and ultimately release them into coldwater habitat. Since trout are an indicator species, young people begin to understand the relationship between the survival of trout and the clean water required for them to survive. When people young and old experience these semi-wild places for themselves first-hand, it fosters a conservation ethic that persists in their lives, whether they end up being anglers or simply citizens who enjoy 'urban nature' in other ways."

Kiki stops to crimp a small weight to the tippet a few inches above her black streamer, and casts again into a pool. A few short strips later, she brings to net a pretty, glistening brown trout. I'm able to snap a quick photo before she releases it, and we watch it swim away. Later, as we stow our gear, prepping for our next destination, a family embarking on a late-morning walk and curious about our fishing success stops by to chat. Naturally, Kiki can't resist the opportunity to share angling joy, so I show the children a photo of the brown trout, and Kiki tells them about the fish who live in Accotink Creek. Judging by their response, I can guess that before too long, they'll be asking their parents for a starter fly rig of their own.

Holmes Run

In the parking lot at the entrance to Holmes Run, we enjoy a tailgate lunch of roast beef sandwiches topped with horseradish mayo. Here, too, late-autumn foliage of yellow and rusty orange adds vibrancy to the paved pathway that runs parallel to the stream. Seeing our waders and rods, passersby ask us about fishing conditions, relating their love of and perspectives on this stretch of water. One gentleman angler shares water temperature information with Kiki, and another recreational user who lives in the bordering apartment building says he'd be spiritually impoverished without the opportunity to escape the daily grind by walking regularly in this unexpectedly picturesque area.

After lunch, we spend several hours wading and casting, navigating the leaf-slick banks and ankle-turning rocks which are always par for the course. Note: Hip waders will do here, but the waters of Holmes Run are deeper than one might expect, and chest waders are a better option if one is intent on staying dry. As we move along the water, Kiki relates that, though the majority of users are respectful, both Accotink and Holmes Run are transgressed by poachers from time to time after a trout stocking, and the occasional angler is caught using live bait. At one juncture, she points out a pile of tires and yellow bags of garbage awaiting pick-up, collected by volunteers from a Potomac Watershed clean-up organization. Here too, Kiki proudly points out, volunteerism is alive and well.

As we hike our way back to the truck, Kiki waves toward a familiar figure wading mid-stream. It was a friend she'd made during her work with a Casting for Recovery group. This angler, hooked on fishing, had driven all the way up from the Middle Peninsula to try her luck, proving that these urban fisheries serve as important destinations for non-local anglers who can't spare the time to travel farther west.

At the end of the day, Accotink and Holmes Run are unquestionably fishable streams that will continue to be under pressure for the foreseeable future. They will also continue to be tended by those who appreciate just how necessary they are to the health of the surrounding communities. These waters are like many semi-natural spaces embedded within urban environments: indispensable and imperfect. Author and angler Beau Beasley just about sums it up when he writes:

"I believe the delayed harvest areas across the state are critical, especially those in urban areas. Anglers are always seeking new areas to fish, but with free time always at a premium, having nearby fishable waters is important… these waters are classic examples of doing the best you can with what you have."

They are also classic examples of what can be achieved when people who care band together to maintain a beloved resource.

Beth Hester is a writer and freelance photographer from Portsmouth. Her passions include reading, shooting, kayaking, fishing, tying saltwater flies, and tending her herb garden.

WHITE-NOSE SYNDROME
Leaves a Trail of Devas

Now confirmed in 13 counties, the disease has biologists bracing for the worst.

Little brown bats with white-nose syndrome, New York. Courtesy of Nancy Heaslip, New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC).

Be Wild! Live Wild! Grow Wild!

by Cristina Santiestevan

Some compare it to the chestnut blight. Others have called it the Great Plague for bats, except the plague was less deadly. Whatever the comparison, nearly everyone agrees that White-Nose Syndrome is one of the worst things to infect North American wildlife in decades. Perhaps more than a century.

So far, White-Nose Syndrome appears to only affect bats, and only some species of bats. But, there's little comfort here. Infected bats—marked with fluffy white fungus on their noses and bodies—die at an alarming rate. Research suggests extinctions may be just a few years away. Even the little brown bat, once one of our most common species, is being considered for the Federal Endangered Species List.

Only two years have passed since White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) was first confirmed in Virginia. Since then, it has spread along the entire length of the state's iconic Appalachian Mountains, and has expanded into neighboring West Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Overall, the fungus has made its way into 16 states and two Canadian provinces, and its rate of dispersal does not appear to be slowing. In total, biologists estimate that well over a million bats have been killed by WNS since 2006, when it was first identified in New York State.

"We're seeing declines basically every place we go," says Rick Reynolds, a wildlife biologist with the Department (DGIF). Reynolds works with a team of biologists who survey bat caves on alternating years. Their findings this year point to a precipitous decline in Virginia's bats. Fatality rates run from 40 to more than 90 percent. One cave held more than 3,000 little brown bats in 2009. When surveyors returned in 2011, less than 50 individuals remained—a roughly 98 percent decline in just two years.

Healthy little brown bat.
©Joe McDonald

Left, likely WNS symptoms at Breathing Cave in Bath County, late February 2009. Courtesy of Wil Orndorff, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage.

Little brown bat; close-up of nose with fungus, New York, Oct. 2008. Courtesy of Ryan von Linden, NYDEC.

DGIF biologist Rick Reynolds exits a cave in Highland County.

©Lynda Richardson

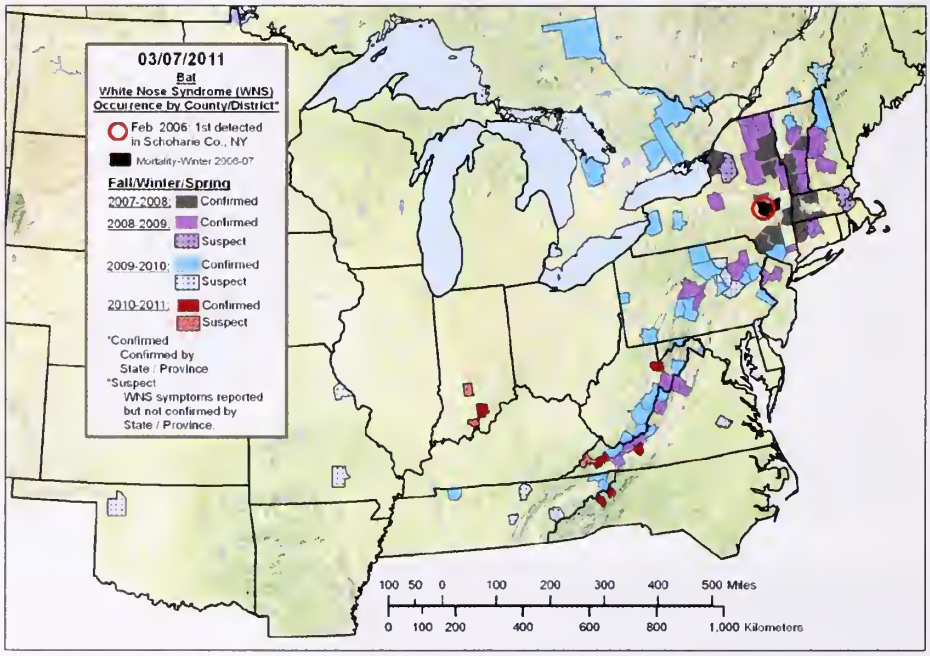
"It's shocking," says Reynolds. "I don't really want to believe or acknowledge that there's that kind of loss occurring out there. You just hope that some individuals will survive this."

Last year, WNS had been confirmed in only five Virginia counties: Bath, Bland, Giles, Rockingham, and Smyth. As of February 2011, the fungus has spread to another eight counties—Chesterfield, Craig, Highland, Montgomery, Pulaski, Russel, Tazewell, and Wise. Statewide, however, the distribution of White-Nose Syndrome is probably much broader than these 13 counties. While biologists are finding WNS-infected bats nearly everywhere they look, they are not looking everywhere.

"The mountains are where the caves are, so that's where we've concentrated our efforts," Reynolds explains. Biologists focus on caves because these are the places where large groups of bats congregate to hibernate during the winter months. This is when White-Nose Syndrome strikes. While the bats hibernate, the white fungus infects the skin of their faces, wings, and bodies. "It's growing on these bats because they're going into hibernation and dropping their body temperatures," says the biologist, who explains that the fungus will not grow above 70°F and that hibernating bats may drop their body temperatures below 50°F.

Biologists survey the caves every other winter, tracking changes in population and species composition and the spread of White-Nose Syndrome. East of the Appalachians, where there are no caves, bats hibernate in small, scattered groups in hollow trees or buildings. Because the hibernation sites are less densely populated and more difficult to locate, biologists have not begun to survey the region. "It's hard to say whether or not White-Nose Syndrome might be in the Piedmont or the Coastal Plain," Reynolds admits, adding, "there's no reason to think it would be any different."

Little brown bat with white-nose syndrome, New York. Courtesy of Al Hicks, NYDEC.



Courtesy of Cal Butchkoski, Pennsylvania Game Commission

The WNS-positive bat found in Chesterfield County—just south of Richmond—suggests that White-Nose Syndrome has at least visited the counties east of the Appalachians. However, this lone bat was found in the summer, and biologists do not know whether it hibernated in Chesterfield County or in an Appalachian cave more than 100 miles to the west. The distinction is important. Biologists do not yet know whether the cold-adapted and moisture-loving fungus can survive outside humid, cool caves. If this bat hibernated in cave-free Chesterfield County, it would suggest the fungus is less constrained by humidity levels than previously believed.

The humidity tolerance of *Geomyces destructans*—the fungus associated with White-Nose Syndrome—is just one of many

You Can Help Track White-Nose Syndrome

Know the symptoms

White-Nose Syndrome takes hold of bats during the winter months of hibernation, and symptoms may linger into the spring or early summer months. Be alert for the following symptoms:

- White fungus on the nose, face, body, or wings;
- Difficulty flying, or apparent disorientation;
- Flying during the day, especially during the winter and early spring months;
- Dead or dying bats.

Report unusual bat behavior

Please report all suspicious bat activity, including dead or dying bats, to DGIF: www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bats/white-nose-syndrome/wns-observation.asp

unanswered questions about the devastating condition. Another question—a big question—is exactly *how* WNS kills bats. The characteristic white fungus is not so different from other skin funguses, such as athlete's foot or ringworm. It consumes dead skin cells, and it itches. But, unlike athlete's foot and ringworm, *Geomyces destructans* consumes living skin cells as well. So, it itches a lot. Enough to waken hibernating bats, who burn precious fat reserves every time they stir from their deep slumber. Disturbed enough, hibernating bats may deplete their energy stores and begin to starve. Desperate, some bats take to the winter skies, seeking insects that won't emerge for weeks or even months.

So, it seems possible that hibernating bats are literally being irritated to death.

But, then again, maybe not. According to Reynolds, some dead bats appear to have no signs of the characteristic white fungus and even seem to be of a healthy weight. If these apparently healthy bats are dying from the same underlying cause as their white-nosed peers, then perhaps the fungus is nothing more than an opportunistic infection, taking advantage of an already weakened immune system. Basically, a symptom of something else. Something nastier.

Bat skull and remains in a WNS-affected site, October 2010. Courtesy of Ann Froschauer, USFWS.

And then there's this: Biologists suspect the fungus may be a transplant from Europe, where bats have been found with the characteristic fungus but do not appear to be dying from their infections. Are European bats resistant? Does this mean North American bats could develop a resistance too? Or, is the European strain of this fungus somehow different? Less lethal? For now, all we can do is add these to the lengthy list of unanswered questions.

Among all these questions, there is one thing we know for sure. We are going to miss our bats. Researchers estimate that the one million or more bats that have already died from White-Nose Syndrome would have consumed more than 700 tons of flying insects last year. As WNS spreads, and as more bats die, that number will grow larger. Hundreds of tons of moths, beetles, and mosquitoes—flying insects that a healthy bat population normally controls—will be unleashed on our agricultural crops and family picnics. The economic, environmental, and emotional costs of White-Nose Syndrome will climb high.

Five years have passed since the first white-nosed bats were spotted in a New York cave. Since then, the fungus has overtaken New England, reached south through Virginia to North Carolina, and spread as far west as Oklahoma. Eventually, every hibernating bat in North America may be touched by White Nose Syndrome. With luck, some of them will survive. For now, all we can do is support WNS research, hope for survivors, and cheer on every bat we see in the evening sky.

Cristina Santiestevan writes about wildlife and the environment from her home in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains.

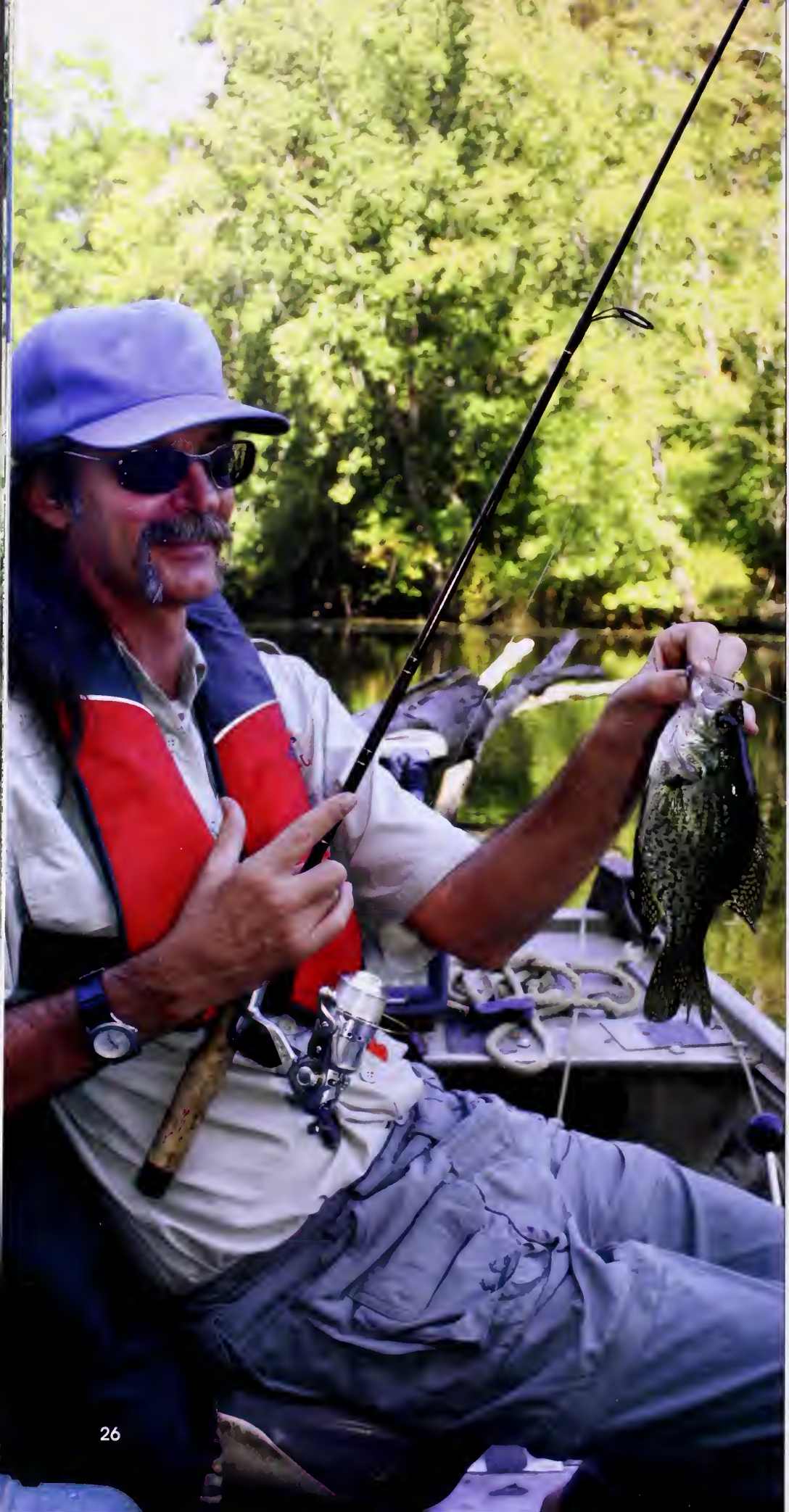
Act Wild

Three simple actions you can take for bats:

1. Install a bat house. Like bird houses, these small wooden structures can be mounted on buildings or trees, and provide a snug home for bats. Because the boxes stay warmer than drafty barns or caves, they may increase the chances of survival for some bat species. Bat Conservational International provides detailed instructions, via their website, for building and installing bat houses: http://batcon.org/index.php/get-involved/install-a-bat-house.html

2. Avoid bat caves. Scientists have confirmed that White-Nose Syndrome can spread through bat-to-bat transmission. But the fungus may also spread on contaminated clothing and caving gear. Help reduce the risk of exposure by avoiding caves throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states. If you must enter a cave, or have come in contact with an infected bat, please observe the recommended decontamination procedures, available online at: www.fws.gov/whitenosesyndrome

3. Talk about bats. One of the greatest challenges with White-Nose Syndrome is lack of public awareness of the disease, and appreciation for bats. Share your knowledge about bats with your friends and family to help others appreciate their value. And talk about the threat of White-Nose Syndrome. Learn more through these websites:
   - DGIF – www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bats/white-nose-syndrome
   - Bat Conservation International – www.batcon.org



Introducing Newcomers to Fishing

Take the initiative to introduce someone to fishing this year. The rewards are tremendous.

photos and story
by Marc N. McGlade

There's a right way and definitely a wrong way to introduce a newcomer to the wonders of fishing. Certain methods and techniques that help teach fishing to novices will greatly increase the odds of getting them "hooked."

A few years ago I served as an adjunct faculty member for a community college in Richmond, and had the pleasure of teaching two classes: beginner and intermediate freshwater fishing. I also instructed for Chesterfield County Parks & Recreation, mainly for kids. Frequently I would conduct seminars throughout the state on fishing tips, advanced techniques, and places to fish—to audiences of all ages.

I found it difficult at first to reach attendees who were new to angling. For instance, overhearing a conversation between two experienced anglers appears to be a completely foreign language to a novice. The lesson learned there was to speak in terms the newcomer could understand. The goal was—and still is—to cultivate a desire for a newcomer to want to fish, to be outdoors, and to enjoy that time with kids and family. If a new angler feels completely overwhelmed and lost in the lingo, he might throw his hands up in the air and walk away. That's obviously not the reaction we are looking for.

Introducing kids to fishing early on in life will help reinforce their desire to fish and spend time outdoors.

One technique I tried helped quite a bit. Even a quick learner can get confused when learning to tie fishing knots. The line is thin, oftentimes clear, and hard to see. That makes it difficult to follow the steps involved along the way. For this, I unfolded a standard coat hanger and formed it into a giant fishing hook. For the line, I used a ¼-inch diameter rope. This was so much easier for students to follow. It made sense to them and greatly assisted with learning vital fishing knots—such as the Palomar knot, the Trilene® knot, the improved clinch knot, and the basic uni-knot.

For beginners, the improved clinch knot is all that is required. It can be used in almost all traditional freshwater rigging with spin-casting, spinning, or bait-casting gear. If an angler could only pick one knot to tie, this would likely be the one.

Keep Up the Interest

One quick way to kill any hope of grooming future anglers is to take them on a trip where catching fish requires advanced skills. For example, when resident experts are crying the blues about the largemouth bass not biting at the local lake in the blazing-hot summer, it's probably not the opportune time to teach someone to drag a Carolina-rigged plastic worm over deep-water humps. Instead, stack the odds in your favor and choose times and species that are willing to bite and easy to catch.

Many species come to mind. Whether you invite along a 4-year-old kid or a 60-year-old adult, bream are among the easiest freshwater species to catch. They can turn an otherwise boring day into one that a new angler will remember for years. Other excellent species to pursue are hickory and American shad during their annual spring runs in Virginia's tidal rivers. White and black crappie or channel catfish are also usually willing to play. And chasing the above-mentioned fish doesn't take a suitcase full of lures and gear to pursue.

Using bobbers (also called floats) is fun for folks new to fishing, because it signals what is going on beneath the water's surface. Baits such as night crawlers, minnows, chicken livers, crickets, or red wigglers will catch many species of fish. The goal is action. Kids, and adults too for that matter, will lose interest if nothing is happening. To help keep

Red wigglers paired with a sinker will fool bream in many of Virginia's ponds, lakes, and rivers.

When teaching someone to tie fishing knots, it is helpful to start with a rope.

boredom at bay, try using live bait for easy-to-catch fish that will make for a fun day.

Make casting fun—not a lesson in pinpoint accuracy. You might suggest a contest where the person closest to the target, or the one who makes the smallest splash, doesn't have to clean the fish (if taking any home).

Choose Easy Access

It's best to choose easy access to fishing holes. Don't take a newbie to the hinterlands, park the truck, load him from head to toe with gear, and tell him to follow you on a two-mile hike through thickets and briars to reach the secret honey hole an hour later. Make it easy. Local public lakes, farm ponds, state parks, rivers, and streams can all be accessed with ease, and without a boat.

Many of the Department-owned lakes have accessible piers for people to spread out and enjoy a day together. Often there will be brush or other sunken structure to help attract fish to the pier.

There are many locations in Virginia that rent equipment. Jonboats or canoes are easy to operate and many concessionaires rent them for hourly or daily use. Bank fishing is available at most bodies of water.

Plan Ahead and Pick Your Day

This seems like common sense, but choose days when the weather is pleasant. Howling winds, 45-degree air temperature, and sideways rain will not likely result in a newcomer asking to go again! If summertime days are brutal, one option is to venture out at dusk. The bite can turn on and the temperature is more tolerable.

If rain is in the forecast, plan appropriately. It is also important to pack food and drinks for fishing trips. Drinks containing sugar or caffeine are not the best choice, particularly during hot months. Foods that are easy to handle and not too messy work best.

Equipment Do's and Don'ts

Just as you wouldn't start a novice golfer out by having him or her hit a Big Bertha driver on the first tee, the same thinking applies to fishing. The worst thing to do is hand a beginner a bait-casting reel and tell him to have at it. Even experienced anglers get the dreaded "bird's nest" snarl from time to time with highly efficient and effective reels. Such reels have no place in a novice's arsenal. Start easy with spin-casting equipment. Once casting is learned on these rigs, graduate to spinning gear before stepping into the bait-casting fray.

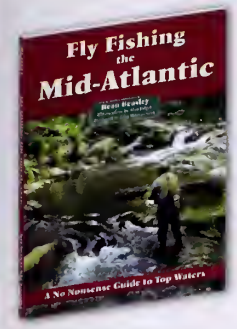
Bring a Camera or Camcorder

Nothing can capture the moment like a camera or camcorder. The smile on the face of someone who just caught their first fish makes for a wonderful photograph. Take some candid shots in addition to staged photos to recall the true experience. Action photos or video is a great angle to take, as well; such memories can last a lifetime.

RESOURCES

- Visit the Department's website to learn more about locations across Virginia to fish, available amenities, and fishing regulations at www.HuntFishVA.com.
- Learn about the Future Fisherman Foundation ("Hooked on Fishing – Not on Drugs") and their efforts at www.futurefisherman.org.
- Register for fishing workshops at your county parks and recreation department.
- Attend fishing shows and expos to speak with industry experts.
- Watch fishing shows on TV to learn more in advance of a fishing trip.
- Read fishing articles, whether your role is student or teacher.

Marc N. McGlade has taught fishing classes to hundreds of young kids, teens, and adults. He hopes future generations will love the outdoors as much as he does.



Outdoor Classics

by Beth Hester

Fly Fishing the Mid-Atlantic: A No Nonsense Guide to Top Waters
by Beau Beasley
2011 No Nonsense Fly Fishing Guidebooks
www.nononsenseguides.com
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Soft cover with color illustrations/photos/maps
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"The best way to go fly fishing is to find out a little something about a water, and then just go there. Experimentation, trial and error, wrong turns, surprises, self-reliance and new discoveries, even in familiar waters are what make the memories."
–The No Nonsense Creed

Long-time readers of *Virginia Wildlife* will recognize the name Beau Beasley. Not only is he a frequent contributor to a number of well-respected outdoor and fishing-related publications, he also serves as current director of The Virginia Fly Fishing and Wine Festival. Beau is a tireless advocate for the fly-fishing waters of the mid-Atlantic region, and in 2007, he enthusiastically shared a good chunk of regional fishing wisdom in his first No Nonsense Guide publication, *Fly Fishing Virginia*, which has become an L.L. Bean bestseller.

This new book takes readers on a tour of top mid-Atlantic fly fishing destinations, traversing seven states: Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. Beau spent nearly two years researching information for this new volume. He personally visited and fished every location, met with neighboring outfitters, perused tackle shops, and interviewed local guides.

The result is a must-have resource containing detailed maps of each fishing spot, area photos, known hatches, suggested flies and equipment, season and creel limits, accommodations, and family-friendly activities. For example, in the sidebar accompanying Lehigh River information, Beau includes details on the Crayola Crayon Factory tour. Beau is a firm believer in mentoring the next generation of young anglers, and this wide-ranging volume will make planning family vacations and fishing trips a snap.

Apart from the excellent data value of each state-specific chapter are the six pages of thoughtfully included color plates of flies for fishing mid-Atlantic waters: dry flies and terrestrials, nymphs, streamers and wet flies, warmwater, saltwater, and striper flies.

Attention Waterfowl Blind Licensees

There has been a change in the dates when stationary blind licenses can be purchased and posted. The change was made to avoid confusion and overlap between when riparian and non-riparian blind licenses can be purchased and erected. The change creates separate time periods for the purchase and posting of stationary blind licenses based on whether you purchased the blind license as a riparian owner, as a non-riparian owner for a blind that had been licensed in the previous year, or as a non-riparian owner for a blind that had not been licensed in the previous year. The new dates for the purchase of stationary blind licenses are as listed below:

- *Riparian owners, their lessees or permittees:* **May 1 through June 15**; plates with current decal must be affixed to a stake or blind by June 30.
- *Nonriparian license for a stationary blind in the public waters previously licensed the year before:* **July 1 through August 15**; plates with current decal must be affixed to a stake or blind by August 31.
- *Nonriparian license for a stationary blind in the public waters not previously licensed the year before:* **September 1 through October 15**; plates with current decal must be affixed to a stake or blind by November 1.

There has been no change in the date that a stationary blind must be erected. For all stationary blinds, if a stake has been erected on the site of a stationary blind, such stake must be replaced by a blind by November 1.

The other major change waterfowl hunters will need to be aware of is the way blind licenses are purchased. All blind licenses will now be available through the department's point of sale (POS) system just as other licenses are sold. You no longer have to go to the license agent in the county where your blind will be located. You can go to any license agent in the state or you can do it on the Internet from your home!

In the case of stationary blind applicants the same information provided to agents in the past will be collected by the license sales systems. This includes the county and body of water where the blind will be located.

A license will be provided to you at the time of sale. Applicants will have the option to request that a blind plate be sent if they do not already have one. The blind plate, if requested, and a decal for the plate will be mailed to you within 3 to 5 business days.

Information on the new dates and the purchasing process is posted on our website and will be listed in our hunting and waterfowl regulation brochures. Thank you for your support of our wetland and waterfowl resources.

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Outdoor Report
Managing and Conserving Our Wildlife and Natural Resources

For a free email subscription, visit our website at www.HuntFishVA.com. Click on the Outdoor Report link and simply fill in the required information.

Correction:
In our March issue, on page 20, we incorrectly identified a jumping spider as a wolf spider. We apologize for the mistake.

Report Wildlife Violations
1-800-237-5712

Don't Take That Feeder Down Too Early Next Fall

My family vacation home near Endicott provides me with many opportunities to observe wildlife. In late October of 2009 I had planned to take our hummingbird feeder down but, before I could do so, I observed what appeared to be one hummingbird still around. It was obviously shocking to see one that late, particularly in the mountains, but we refilled the feeder and hung it back out.

The next day I looked out the back window where the feeder was hanging and there was a hummingbird feeding. I eased up to the window and saw that it appeared to be a rufous hummingbird, whose GPS had gotten off a bit during his flight from Alaska to Mexico. I had been using my 500mm with a 1.4 teleconverter to shoot some cedar waxwings and, in the excitement, did not take time to remove it. I took some shots but did not get what I considered good quality.

The next morning I took the teleconverter off my camera and was able to get a little closer and shoot with the lens wide open (f4). The sun comes up behind our cabin and when it clears the ridge behind us, it shines full light right on my feeder. Knowing hummers need to feed 3 to 5 times per hour gives you a little more patience, because this time of year you have the only game in town. I proceeded to shoot at 6 frames per second every time he came to the feeder. The light allowed me to get my shutter speed up high enough to show his wings, and that is as good as it gets!

I later obtained the concurrence of a more knowledgeable bird watcher (Langhorne Bell) and, sure enough, it was a rufous hummingbird. This past November, he paid us another visit over the Thanksgiving weekend—quite a nice surprise!

So, with that in mind, next year leave the feeder up a while longer and pay close attention to what is feeding.

This story and photos were contributed by Horace L. Best, a CPA who spends much of his non-working hours in the mountains of Virginia where, he says, there is no place he would rather be.

Top, first sighting of rufous hummingbird, Oct. 2009. Here, the author believes the same bird returned in late Nov. 2010.

The Virginia Herpetological Society will help Virginia State Parks celebrate their 75th birthday by holding the Annual Survey and Meeting at the state's largest state park, Pocahontas State Park near Richmond, May 20–22. Almost 8,000 acres are available to the VHS in our first large-scale survey around Richmond. Pocahontas State Park is relatively centralized in the state, and has a lot of on-site amenities for family members not atttending the survey. For more information, go to: www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/2011-events/2011-events.htm.

The Photo Issue is out!

Virginia Wildlife Photo Issue is now available for purchase. Order your copy today at www.HuntFishVA.com

"Well, I got a hunting and fishing license and I'm going to use them."

Why Deer Must Remain Wild in Virginia

White-tailed deer and other native wildlife belong to no one person, but instead, are held in trust for the benefit of all Virginians. A few facilities are allowed to possess native or exotic deer in the state, and to do so they are permitted by the Department (DGIF) for educational or rehabilitation purposes.

Deer, like all wild animals, are potentially dangerous to people when threatened or confined. Fawns that are bottle-fed by humans become particularly aggressive as they mature. Mature male deer are most likely to attack people during the fall breeding season. Since 1988, at least 45 deer have attacked humans in the United States and Canada, resulting in 51 human injuries and 9 deaths.

Moving deer from one place to another and/or confining them within captive facilities increases the risk of disease transmission to other wildlife, to domestic animals, and to humans. Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and bovine tuberculosis (TB) are two diseases that can be spread by confining or moving deer. The DGIF remains vigilant in its attempts to prevent further spread of CWD, found currently in Frederick County and adjacent Hampshire County, West Virginia.

The Department strongly discourages people from keeping wild animals as pets. Many people do not fully appreciate the care required by wildlife.

What Happens to Tame Deer

When VDGIF discovers a tame deer that is held illegally, Department personnel must confiscate and destroy the deer. This is unpleasant but necessary because:

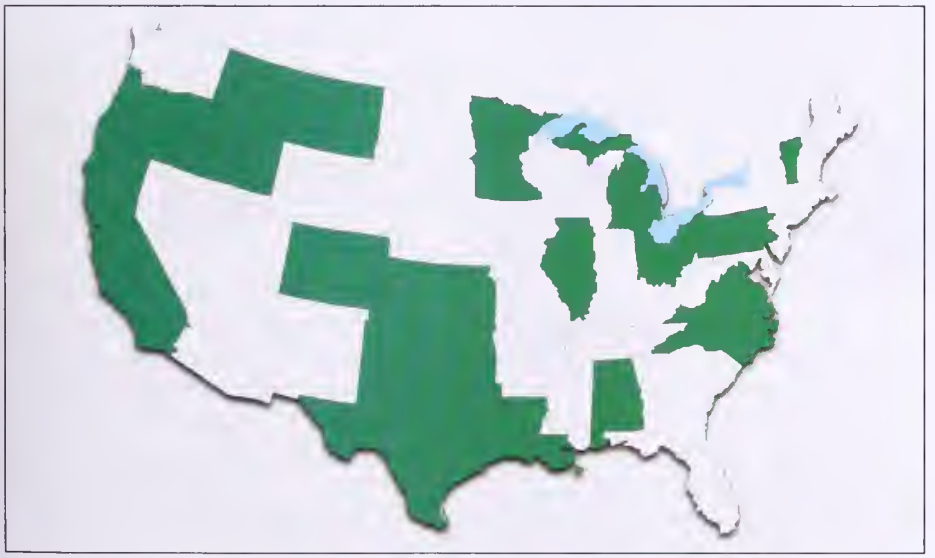
- It would be irresponsible to ignore the potential risks to wildlife diseases and to human safety;
- A tame deer usually cannot be rehabilitated and/or released into the wild; and
- When not knowing the origin of an illegally-held deer, even zoos are reluctant to accept these animals because of potential disease threats.

What You Can Do to Help

To keep deer wild and to protect our wildlife resources, you can help by doing the following:

1. **If you find a fawn, please leave it where you found it.** It is normal for female deer to leave their hidden fawns alone for long periods as the adults feed.
2. **Report pet or tame deer to DGIF.** While you may hesitate to call if it means the deer will be destroyed, please know that you are doing the right thing. Addressing the problem early will reduce risks of human injury and animal disease transmission and prevent deer from being tamed and destroyed in the future.

DGIF offices are located in: Richmond (804) 367-6482; Charles City (804) 829-6580; Forest (434) 525-7522; Marion (276) 783-4860; Verona (540) 248-9360; and Fredericksburg (540) 899-4169.



States with newspaper reports of captive and free-ranging deer attacking people during the period 1988–2010 (in green).

IMAGE OF THE MONTH

Congratulations go to Brandie Nicholson of Locust Dale for her very cool shot of slugs mating at night! (How in the heck did you spot this?) A slug is hermaphroditic, meaning that it has both male and female organs. This image reveals the process involved when slugs begin to mate. We suggest you use your imagination! Here, Brandie captured the beginning of the action. Nature is so amazing! Kodak EasyShare Z812 IS Zoom Digital camera set on the Night Portrait setting.

You are invited to submit one to five of your best photographs to "Image of the Month," Virginia Wildlife Magazine, P.O. Box 11104, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. Send original slides, super high-quality prints, or high-res jpeg, tiff, or raw files on a disk and include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or other shipping method for return. Also, please include any pertinent information regarding how and where you captured the image and what camera and settings you used, along with your phone number. We look forward to seeing and sharing your work with our readers.

PHOTO TIPS

by Lynda Richardson

New Categories for the Photo Contest

Congratulations to all who entered this year's Annual Photography Contest! It was a huge hit, and we are very pleased with the March 2011 issue. To shake things up a bit, the staff of the magazine have decided to challenge our readers to something different: new categories for submissions! Here are the changes we made.

Scenic Seasons, which originally called for images with an obvious seasonal theme, will now be titled **Landscapes.** In this new category, we will be looking specifically for gorgeous landscape photographs taken anywhere in Virginia.

Cold & Clammy Critters has been changed to **Under the Surface**. This new category should bring out a lot of creativity in our contestants! We will be looking for images shot under water, as well as from the surface down into the water. Subjects could include crayfish, salamanders, fish, aquatic insects, jellyfish, and other watery life forms. Examples of this can be seen in this year's first- and third-place winners: Jim Kirby's image of tadpoles in the shadow of a sycamore tree and Dudley Olcott's jellyfish, taken from a dock.

The *Sporting Life* is now **Gone Fishing**. Here, we would like you to investigate fishing as a journey and not necessarily focus on the quest of the biggest catch. In this category it will be very important for subjects to have on their life jackets where appropriate (age five and under when in a boat). Images submitted without appropriate safety gear will be disqualified.

Marvelous Mammals will now be called **Furry Critters** but please, do not send us images of your pets or farm animals! We will be looking for the same delightful game mammals (including hunting scenes) that have been submitted in the past but are hoping that folks will expand their efforts beyond the obvious whitetail deer and gray squirrel into furry, nongame species such as mice, moles, flying squirrels, and skunks (be careful!).

Under the Surface will be a challenging category, no doubt! One March, during their brief breeding season, I photographed this spotted salamander in a vernal pool at night. The salamander was under water and I shot this image while standing above it, using a flash and the help of others holding flashlights so I could find and focus on my subject.
© 2009 Lynda Richardson

A Bug's Life has been replaced with **Patterns & Textures**. Now I know there will be a bunch of bug photographers out there who will groan when they read this, but don't despair! This category is made to challenge you to GET EVEN CLOSER! Photograph a super close-up of a butterfly's wing or the eyes of a jumping spider. We are hoping to challenge photographers to shoot in a way they might not have tried before. Examples might include: close-ups of fungus, repeated patterns of the leaves of a fern, a beautiful grouping of seed pods, scales of a freshly caught brook trout, the lines of a fence or trees along a road, or a bunch of shells on the beach. Use your imagination!

Birds of a Feather will now simply be called **Birds**. We knew better than to mess with this popular category. All we ask is that you submit only native birds photographed in Virginia. Please DO NOT submit pets and/or domestic birds such as chickens, parrots, and/or peafowl.

Fantastic Flowers has been eliminated to make room for **A Dog's Life**. I am very excited about this category! In *A Dog's Life* we are looking for hunting dogs in action. A great example is this year's first-place winner, Douglas Graham's Weimaraner hunting in the snow.

Another change: this year we are combining the two *Kids and Cameras* categories into one. **Kids and Cameras** will now be for ages 6 to 16 years and kids may submit any images pertaining to the above categories.

As a surprise, we have added a bonus **Humor** section in all categories. I'm not sure how a landscape can be funny, but we are encouraging participants to enter any humorous images they come up with in the given categories. One winner will be selected in the *Humor* category, and a prize will be given!

We hope that these changes will inspire contestants to experiment with something new and different. And to help you along the way, there will be several *Photo Tips* columns that offer ideas about how to tackle some of these new categories. I hope you will find this to be a fun and challenging year of photography. Good Luck and Happy Shooting!

Understanding Marine Weather Forecasts

Have you ever listened to the marine weather forecast and wondered what it really means? I spent many years listening to those forecasts, reading them, and broadcasting urgent marine messages for boaters when impending foul weather was approaching. The other thing that I recall doing often while assigned to various stations throughout my Coast Guard days was hoisting those mysterious flags that tell you what the forecast is.

Things to pay attention to regarding weather are a small craft advisory, and gale, storm, or tropical warnings and hurricanes.

I am often asked what constitutes a small craft. There is no solid definition of what a small craft is. The vessel itself is less critical than the operator's experience with how that vessel handles inclement weather, strong winds, and heavy seas. As a rule, I would consider anything less than 65 feet in length to be a small craft—depending on whether you are on open or protected waters.

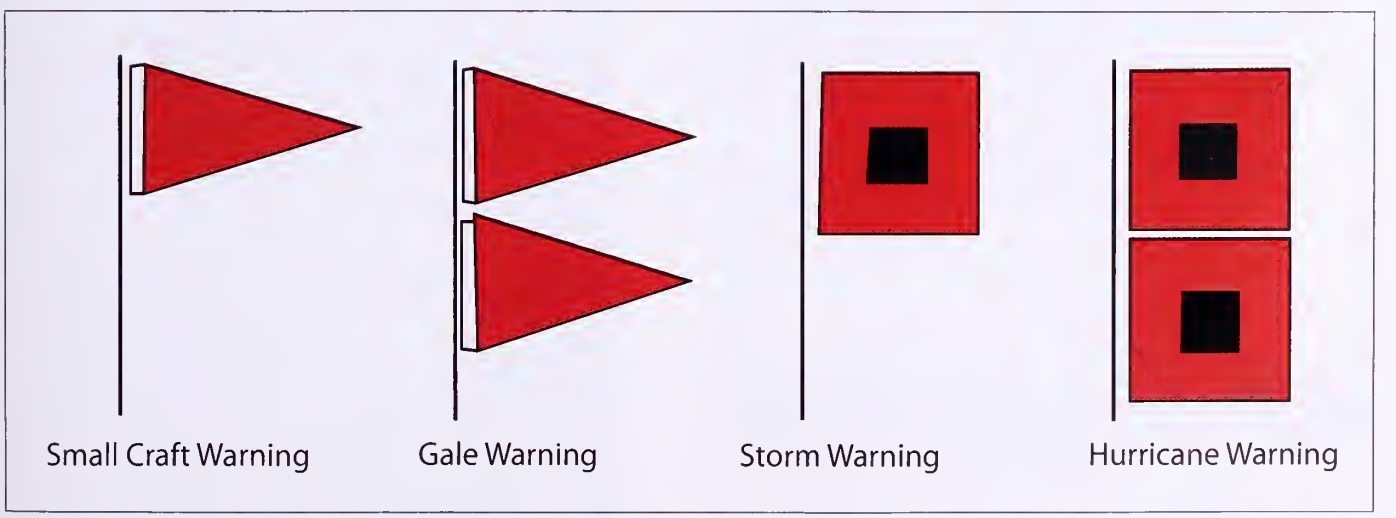
- *Small Craft Advisory:* Forecast winds of 18 to 33 knots (21 to 38 mph). Small craft advisories may also be issued for hazardous sea conditions or lower wind speeds that may affect small craft operations. Denoted by a single red pennant or by two vertical lights consisting of a red over a white.
- *Gale Warning:* Forecast winds of 34 to 47 knots (39 to 54 mph). Denoted by two red pennants flying, one above the other, or two vertical lights consisting of a white over a red.
- *Storm Warning:* Forecast winds of 48 knots (55 mph) or greater. Denoted by a red flag with a black square in the middle or by two vertical red lights consisting of a red over a red.
- *Tropical Storm Warning:* Forecast winds of 48 to 63 knots (55 to 73 mph) associated with a tropical storm. This is denoted by a red flag with a black square in the middle or by two vertical lights consisting of a red over a red.
- *Hurricane Warning:* Forecast winds of 64 knots (74 mph) or higher associated with a hurricane. This is denoted by two red flags with black squares in the middle flying vertically one above the other, or by three vertical lights consisting of a red over a white over a red.

Also important to understand:

- *Dew Point:* In its simplest terms, the dew point is the temperature at which relative humidity becomes dew. This can come in the form of precipitation or fog.
- *Barometric Pressure:* When the barometer is falling, it means that the atmospheric pressure is dropping or falling—which leads to storms and rain or other precipitation, depending on the temperature. When the barometric pressure is rising, it means fair, dry weather ahead.

Remember, the best approach is to get the weather forecast before you go out and if it's forecasted to be bad, don't go. It's much more fun to boat when you have "Fair Winds and Following Seas!" Until next time: Be Responsible, Be Safe, and Have Fun!

Tom Guess, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.), serves as the state boating law administrator at the DGIF.



Dining In

by Ken and Maria Perrotte

Confit of Upland Game Bird

Wild quail or grouse can be hard to find, but licensed shooting preserves offer thousands of Virginia wingshooters excellent opportunities to get their pointing dogs some work and some delicate meat for the dinner table.

The legs and thighs of any bird cook very differently than breast meat. For some pheasant and chukar, we borrowed the art of confit, an old French method for making the legs tender and tasty. This method slightly cures the meat and slowly cooks it in fat until tender. To get the needed quantity of fat, use all olive oil or mix the olive oil with chicken, duck, or goose fat. Due to flavoring, though, don't use too much duck or goose fat. Once the meat is eaten, the fat can be re-used.

Making Confit

Ingredients

6 legs of pheasant or 8 of chukar
4 to 6 cups of olive oil, butter, lard, or chicken fat

Brine Ingredients

¼ cup kosher salt
2 tablespoons dried thyme
10 whole black peppercorns
1 tablespoon rosemary
1 bay leaf
3 cloves garlic
½ lemon cut into 4 or 6 pieces
1 cup orange juice
2 quarts water (more or less may be needed)

Combine brine ingredients in a large glass or ceramic bowl. Add legs, and if necessary, add water to ensure they are fully covered with brine. Cover and refrigerate at least 6 hours but no longer than 72. The longer you brine, the saltier and more cured the meat.

Remove legs from liquid; place in a deep roasting pan just large enough to accommodate the meat. Add fat and olive oil, covering legs completely. Cook at 225° to 250° for about 5 hours. The fat should be lightly bubbling during cooking. When done, the meat should be tender and easily separate from the bone.

Cool and pack with the fat in airtight containers. Completely surround the legs with the fat. It will keep in the refrigerator for a couple of weeks or up to a year in the freezer.

To eat, drain the oil from the meat, blot the meat with paper towels, and then debone to add to a host of salad and pasta dishes where the meat is as much a seasoning as the main course.

Confit Appetizer

½ cup confit meat
3 teaspoons olive oil, divided
1 cup diced peeled eggplant
¼ teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon diced roasted green chili peppers
Goat cheese
Pita bread

Fruit Salsa

¼ cup mango, diced
⅓ cup pineapple, diced
1 tablespoon red onion, diced
1 tablespoon dried cranberries
2 teaspoons lime juice
1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
½ teaspoon chopped cilantro
¼ teaspoon ground ginger
¼ teaspoon cumin

Peel and dice the eggplant, toss with salt, place on paper towel or coffee filter, and let sit for about 20 min. to remove moisture. Drain confit from oil and debone. Pat with a paper towel to remove excess oil. Shred meat into ¼- to 1-inch pieces. In a small skillet, sauté the eggplant in 2 teaspoons oil over medium heat until soft and golden brown. Toss together the meat, eggplant, and chilies.

Heat the other teaspoon olive oil over med-high heat. Slice the pita in half and split to make four pieces. Add to the pan and lightly toast on both sides. Spread a layer of goat cheese on each piece of bread and top with about 2 tablespoons of meat mixture. Garnish with more goat cheese. Serve with salsa and toasted pecans or walnuts.

To make the salsa, mix all ingredients and refrigerate for at least an hour to blend flavors. You can also use more meat mixture to make a pita pocket sandwich. This makes a nice lunch when served with a green salad topped with raspberry vinaigrette dressing.

The rest of the bird…

We often separate the legs and thighs from the breasts of any larger upland bird. This breast meat can be used in most chicken recipes. For example, the pheasant and chukar were added to a penne pasta casserole, cobbled together with a simple mix of the breasts, a little ham, butter, olive oil, mixed cheeses, sun-dried tomatoes, mushrooms, and some rosemary. Just remember, those pheasant and chukar breasts will really dry out if overcooked. Brown them a little and then finish the cooking in the casserole where they'll pick up some of the moisture from other ingredients.

GEAR UP FOR THE SUMMER!

National Safe Boating Week
May 21–27, 2011

For information about how to gear up for the summer, get your boat ready, or to find a boating safety course go to www.HuntFishVA.com/boating

Be Safe **Always Wear Your Life Jacket** **Have Fun**

©Dwight Dyke

The Virginia Fisherman Identification Program is a state program to register saltwater anglers every year without charge. Anglers can register online at www.mrc.virginia.gov/FIP or by calling toll-free 1-800-723-2728. Registration is quick, easy, and free. Yes, it's free!!!

Magazine subscription-related calls only 1-800-710-9369 ◆ Twelve issues for just $12.95
All other calls to (804) 367-1000; (804) 367-1278 TTY

New!

Wildlife Conservationist License Plate Now Available

Virginia motorists have a new opportunity to show how much they care about wildlife by being among the first to drive away with the new "Bluebird" Wildlife Conservationist License Plate. And, a portion of each purchase helps support wildlife conservation throughout the state! To learn more, visit

www.dgif.virginia.gov/plates

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